

TEXAS VERSUS CONNECTICUT

The next time I am in Texas, I will make it a point to buy some groceries at Two Rivers Grocery & MKT. It is not everyday that a man will do what is right by another man. Doing the right thing SHOULD NOT require an act of Congress, although in some cases it obviously does. So, let it be a colorful article. Help end racism and discrimination.

Lawsuit claims Black Sacker, ban from Big Sandy grocery store violated customer's rights



[KEVIN GREEN](#)

Grocery store violated rights, lawsuit claims

Aaron Menefee sacks groceries. Wednesday at Two Rivers Grocery & Market in Big Sandy. A man's lawsuit says his rights were violated when Menefee bagged his groceries in March.

Lawsuit claims black sacker, ban from Big Sandy grocery store violated customer's rights By Sarah Thomas sthomas@news-journal.com Longview News-Journal | 58 comments
BIG SANDY -- A Hawkins man is claiming his civil rights and religious freedom were violated earlier this year when a black man sacked his groceries and a Big Sandy grocery store owner banned the customer from the business.
DeWitt R. Thomas filed a federal lawsuit in July against Keith Langston, owner of Two Rivers Grocery & Market.

According to the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Tyler, Thomas entered the market on March 5 to buy food. He stated in a nine-page, hand-written lawsuit that he told the grocery sacker, a black man, "Wait a minute, don't touch my groceries. I can't have someone negroidal touch my food. It's against my creed."
Thomas claimed the cashier was "perplexed" by his request and yelled at him to take his items and leave.

In a telephone interview Wednesday, Thomas said, "It's pretty simple. They treated me really bad because I told them it was against my creed."
According to the lawsuit, Thomas went on to explain he meant a black person when he used the term "negroidal."
The sacker, Aaron Menefee, said he thought Thomas was just kidding around.
"The first time he said it, I thought he was joking," Menefee said. "Then he just kept repeating it."

Menefee said once he realized Thomas was serious, he called for someone else to sack the groceries, at which time Menefee went to another part of the store.
"I didn't feel physically threatened," Menefee said. "I just felt verbally assaulted."
Langston wasn't in the store at the time, but his employees told him about the incident.
"I decided when I heard about what happened that I was going to file a criminal trespass against him," Langston said. "I just had to wait for him to be present so he could sign it."
When Thomas returned two days later, he noticed the same black man would be sacking his groceries, so he again requested the "Negro" not handle his groceries, according to the lawsuit.

This time, Langston was there. He called police to serve Thomas a criminal trespass warning.
While waiting for the police, an employee locked the doors, and the lawsuit claims Thomas was "unlawfully restrained."
Thomas said Langston broke the law the night he locked him in the store.
"We were closing, and I don't know of a business that doesn't lock their doors when they close. It keeps more people from coming in," Langston said.
Thomas said he doesn't understand why he had to deal with the same situation twice.
"My question is, why after I told them how I felt and that it was against my creed did this negroid try to impress himself upon me and try to handle my groceries again," Thomas said.

Thomas said his religious beliefs are based on Vedism, which he said encompasses Hinduism. "Vedism translates into knowledge. I am not this way because I am ignorant. Ignorance is the enemy," he said.

Thomas said he has not broken any laws and was exercising his religious freedom and the rights he has been given.

"White people are to be protected under the civil rights law just as anyone else," Thomas said. "It would be the same as if you asked that a congoid (a person from west/central Africa) not touch your food."

Thomas' based his claim that his civil rights were violated on that criminal trespass order. He also said Langston is wrong for trying to tell him who can touch his groceries and refusing to serve him.

"When I go through (a store) and buy groceries, those groceries become my property," Thomas said.

Langston said he is not trying to tell Thomas what to believe or how to live, but his store is a privately owned business.

"He was banned because he was using racial slurs, but he has turned it into a religious thing," Langston said.

Langston said Thomas would have been allowed to come back had he said he preferred to sack his own groceries.

"We have a few people who want to sack their own groceries, but it's not for the same reasons DeWitt gave," Langston said. "They do it because they just like to have their stuff bagged a certain way, certain groceries in certain bags."

Thomas said he is going forward with his complaint because Langston has no right to stand against what he believes in.

"If he wants to stand in opposition of who I am, then we are going to go forward with this here thing," Thomas said.

Langston said he wants the whole thing to just go away, but insists Thomas will never be able to come back into his store. He said Thomas told him he would drop the complaint if he dropped the criminal trespass.

"I've had several people say they would've touched a hell of a lot more than his groceries if they had been in line behind him," Langston said